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THE TRENCH LAD

SAXE CHURCHILL STIMSON

European war, 1914 - Portry

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European war, 1914 - Poetry

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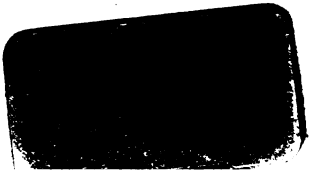

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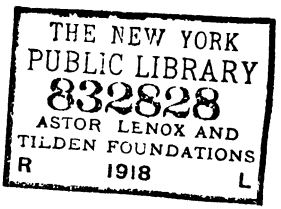

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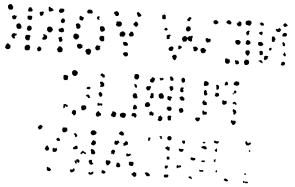

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THE TRENCH LAD

THE TRENCH LAD

NAKED—gasping—burning with heat—
  Nursed by the hail of metal sleet!
  The trench lad wounded lay.
Blanched by the Gas-Reaper's breath,
Waiting the soldier's death.

Down in a dugout in such conditions,
Crazed by concussion of shrieking munitions.
Bursting shells, with their ton of metal—
      Flashing! Smashing!
The flying iron his sick-room riddle,
—Not the touch of his mother's hand
In the far-land—
                But the crashing
Of men above in frenzy clashing!
In stupor he dreams of the home-land,
He drinks once more at the well,
He sees the faces of the loved ones,
And hears what they have to tell.

Banging about! Still in this trench,
Burning on the stretcher-cot,
Panting for breath in the gases' stench—
And no one to care a jot!

To lie like this,
And suffer and ponder:
To die like this,
And home far yonder.

Crash above! They're at it again,
Pouring their steel in our crater;
Over the parapet the shrapnel train,
Dealing destruction and massacre!
Nothing left—but welcome death—
The trench lad pales with failing breath.
"What have I done?" he asks, as,
Clinging to life, his strength resists,
"That I should be born, to die like this!"

THE SERGEANT

For an instant I see the Sergeant,
The section-leader
At the head of his group.
Oblivious of all I call to him—
"Go it, Sergeant; bravo!"
There he stands on a hillock,
Coatless and bareheaded,
His figure clad in a red jersey.
Reckless of shell and of shrapnel,
He brandishes his rifle,
A very God of War!
His terrible bayonet is streaming,
He seems possessed with blind fury.
Always thus shall I see him, standing 'gainst
the blue sky,
Leading the others to carnage!

THE BATTLE

PEEP, Peep!—The bird has left her nest in search of breakfast for her young—

Young as the day, and the year—seventeen—

Bo—om!

A cheery squad at mess—"Here's my home address," said one;

"Remember it, when night comes, if death come."

Boom! Boom! Pom!

And a big shell sails high, like sw-i-sh of hot iron in cold water—a horrible crescendo! And more metal falls nigh.

Above sail the Planes, the aero-scout, on the look-out for aircraft!

And great mortars, of yon inferno, with rumbling and roaring!

—A dame, fat and fearful, with caged cat returning,

"To the rear!" shouts the General. "No place for you here!"—

Whistling screams—advancing lines—Boom! Boom! Pom!

And the music, and the bugle, and the rolling drum

That lead to staggering ranks that come!!

Now!—heart-breaking work of close action, driven to the faction of enemy, cutting and slaughtering, pinioning him nearest—

And the ranks of second company stagger drunkenly through the sea of green fire and smoke.

"En evant!!" "Pas de charge!!"—perdition—explosion—

Murderous enf'lade enclosing—seething—hot-breathing—panting!

And victory!—at last—of gained summit, hard human won.

When all's done, the responses—"Duviver?" "Present!" "Selonti?" "Gone!" "Tombe?" "Gone!" "Macdonald?" "Gone!"—The toll of the goal of Ten-Meter Knoll.

—And the bird returned to her nest unmolested, and men in camp rested.

UNDER-SEA VICTIMS

ENTOMBED in the deep, they lie
On coral bed,
Body resting, soul aspiring,
Till the sea returns to us our dead.

Sarcophagus,
So magnificent,
Ne'er was known.
Built around them, by ocean's wonders,
Their tomb home.

Sun-flecked and untreacherous seas,
They sailed o'er,
—Then the demon's darting shock!
The shivering boat's rock!
The alarm bell—the knell of rolling
Waves, forever tolling.

Far down, 'neath water's denizens
They sleep,
While mermaid angels keep
Watch—hovering round,
Waiting to swing heaven's door hinge—
And in their peace no disturbing sound.

If love can span Atlantic deep,
And reach them there,
Then have they winding-sheet
Luxuriant and rare.
Body resting, soul transcending,
Already winging eternal sky—
And He, who sleeps not, watching by.

THE NIGHTMARE

He had a lurid dream,
A glimpse of rank Inferno,
A thousand miles of battle line,
Upon a throne a king.
And the human line, advancing and retreating,
Obedient to a sign.
To the black gulch they go,
Wherein they throw
The mass of men they mow!
So cheap—were men—he did not know.

This dream had accompaniment of sounds,
Satanic obligato,
A million or so, embroiled in ordered strife,
Sawed, hacked, dismembered by a knife,
A Soldiers' Chorus—plunging out of life.
He struggled to awake
But could not—
And longed for Daybreak!

THE DEATH THROES

MARTIALISM expires hard
Entrenched on many a field,
Defiance of a warring race,
Who cry they will not yield.

Scions of Nobility
And Dukes of Power,
Bemoan the end of strife,
And, stubborn, glower!

No more to lead mankind
A shambled throng,
The War Lord's trade will end!
His occupation gone!

Where the long trenches run
The foe defying,
Peace's triumph soon must come,
War's age is dying!

THE OLD WORLD'S APPEAL

We look to you,
Columbia,
To guide us through.

Your light
Must illumine
Our night!

Your ideals
Our need reveals,—
Hear our appeals.

Fail us not!
Be true
To the best in you:

And thus guided,
We too
Shall find a happier lot!

THE HUMANITARIAN

EARTH has a new ideal,
One for youth, and seer,
A statesman, weeping
Near her nation's bier.

"I would uphold my country,
But I cannot vote for war."
Humanity does restrain me
From those deeds we do abhor.

Ideal statesmanship—
Feeling Womanhood!
Glad, some day, the future,
That Woman thus once stood.

Forever may Her voice
Be heard in State!
Making nations rejoice,
And kind as well as great!

OUR COLORS

AHEAD! our banner led—dipping
Up, now down—
Over the masses of men streaming!
It has the red! From a Maine lad
And a Carolina corporal, one in assault,
Who have dyed our flag a rich crimson:—

We'll remember the day,
And the way they led!
The columns gay,
And the flag ahead!

The blue of sky has tinctured our banner,
Caught from ether,
Lapping yonder,
And the ermine White!
Light to the oppresseds' night.
Bars, stripes, stars, commingled,
Prized in our sight!

Far isles hoist it,
Far peoples look to it,
The wronged seek it,
The world's insignia of the Dawn.

Shops, porch, boulevard, waves of color
The patriots display,
For the Hero's marching way!
That flaunting yard of cloth;
To each age its lesson has taught,
Stained in the blue, red, white,
Saratoga, Santiago,—hand-wrought!

May our flag lead
In charge!—in on-set!
In all that Peace can breed
For the world's need!

Our Colors!

INDEPENDENCE

You are already free, and know not your freedom,
Superb of limb,—mind-crowned!
Toying with big things—
The Art-creative, Music,
—Fashioned stone, and colors laid on.
He alone is free who dares to use his freedom,
Unshackled by other's methods, the rhyme and meter
Of a past poet.
The sun is already above the horizon,
And it is day!
And great things are waiting to be done,
In a new way!
Do not mix black and brown; make a new color!
You have mountains of material, fresh as the West!
And a song sung from their summits
That will charm all who hear it—
If one dare sing it.
Mount yourself upon the pedestal,
And paint, in view, your own picture,
—And let the world look!

THE WEST

Beyond the Cordilleras!
Expansive as the Pacific—its near neighbor!
With a foot on Tamalpias, and the other
On Mount Shasta,—
Carrying the graded iron-trail, lofty, o'er a
Continent's backbone.
A mint of its own, golden store, in its pocket!
Making opinions, prejudices, from raw material, on
every hand, not imported.
The home and hope of Art!
Mountains to paint, herds of cattle, bear and buf-
falo, to sculpture;
A thousand miles of prairie to breathe in, and deco-
rate a canvas, and roam;
A coast-line of ocean, with constant music, no jingle
—but reverberation of orchestration
And the Indian with baton!
Exhaustless themes for verse and prose
And no cramping rhyme and meter
Freedom to hamper.
A People—like their mountains and their plains—
Of large dimension!

COAST OF CALIFORNIA

SUNSHINE
Shimmering sunshine
Bathing the warm coast!
The day July—
Aloft fleecy clouds—white clouds,
Floating clouds
Bath of sunshine!
The Pacific coming in long rolls that cover the beach—and break—in white foam—and go out again—
Rolling! Rolling!
The cool air blowing into one's face comes from The ocean cold and fresh, and one cannot breathe enough. Expand the lungs and breathe!
The Workingman's cart is sunken in the sand, half buried by the water, as it rolls in, surging about him.
He's gathering driftwood.
Children play—just beyond the breakers—away—
And the July day—on the coast!
Sunshine
Shimmering sunshine
Bath of sunshine!
Waves swashing! Breakers foaming!
Rolling! Rolling! Rolling!

FAITH, NOT SIGHT

THE rules of life all seem broken,
The compass no longer points true;
A seething world in commotion,
Transition—from old to new.

We had the problems all ciphered,
And the answers written plain;
Now, we find, we're in error,
And we have them to solve again.

Earth's avalanche of suffering!
The holocaust of blood?
Men—cut up so cheaply—
Human woe at such a flood?

Maybe we've wandered from the way,
Playing with life's toys,
Forgetting in our follies here,
Another world of joys.

We are seeking the way again,
The highroad of right,
Coming with our lesson,
Walking by faith, not sight.

DEATH FOR LIFE

MARVEL of miracles,
The cloven sod,
Touched by His finger,
Smiles again to God!

Some scattered seeds
Squandered in the mold,
Earth—and damp—and dew,
Return a hundred-fold!

Perhaps some kindly act
That I am doing,
Will blossom in Life's Garden
And repay the sowing.

At the great Harvest-Home!
I want to be a Reaper!
I want to bring my bit
When I meet the Garden-Keeper.

TRIED

In one way or another
You must be tried.
The Tempter
Will not be denied.
Without it,
Gross within you
Had not died.

There is no other way,
There is no easy way,
But to meet the day,
And the demand—pay!

There is no way round,
Seek it not,
'Twas ne'er found.
And trials endured—
Soul's inured!
And victory assured!

DISAPPOINTMENTS

UNWELCOME visitors, why so often
At my door do you halt and knock?
Bringing what I do not want,
Or bring too late!
Why of all upon the street
Am I singled out
Your grim face to meet!
I note your calls on others,
And that your unwonted gift
Seems to grow to something supernal,
And they come to shine,
With a touch of the divine,
Like glory of the bright cloud's rift.
Better such a crown
Be won and worn
Than much desired renown!
Grim visitors, give me of your golden store,
That I may also shine and wear that crown!
—Please do not pass my door.

TEMPER

MAY I bear the temper,
The dip in cold water,
The day has to offer.

Monotony of life
Likewise its strife,
Making of me
—What I should be!

As the birds hover,
Chilled in the rain,
Sturdily flutter,
Cheerily sing!

May I bear the temper!
The heat and cold water
The day has to offer!

NOW I KNOW

I DID not know
That people suffered so—
I knew that other children died,
I did not know
That it could come to me.
My child was made for life!
—All things to be.

But mine has died like others,
And lies still,
Playing no more,
Voice hushed the same as others.
Before—I did not know
That people suffered so.
—Now I know.

HOME KEEPING

And they've been doing this, for years and years—
The Woman half;
Getting up in the morning, the dull morning,
And grinding coffee;
And after breakfast clearing away
The same dishes to wash—
Sweeping—dusting—cleaning!
Binding the bruised finger of one of three,
  And kissing the hurt.
More vegetables prepared for dinner;
The same array of stew kettles,
And all to wash again after dinner;
Not going forth to novelty of commerce
And rush and bang of street and shop,
Buoyed up by treasure's trading conquest!
But dull monotony of duller afternoon,
The same stacked stock of out-toed hose
In dull front room!
And—soon—it's time for supper.

THE PRESSMAN

FEEDING the iron maw, nine hours a day
He stands, putting in sheets of tin,
Working mostly for the pay—
And all about the shop's din.

Crash! Down it comes with a smash,
And a piece is formed resembling a dish;
Whirr-r! A belt has slipped yonder,
And a man was almost under,
Drawn by the wiggling belt
As it bounces and hauls about!

The Pressman wipes the sweat from his brow,
And puts in another piece,
And forms another dish.
Ten o'clock indicates the clock yonder,
As his thoughts wander
From steel to food and baked cake.
Crash! He's formed a thousand by this pounding!
Since morning,
And hasn't lost any fingers—
Such incidental dangers are part of his life,
Part of the day's strife.

The Pressman doesn't always think of the machine;
He sometimes thinks what might have been
If he'd been Governor, or Senator.
Crash!
Another dish comes out,
And then it's noon, and with a broom
He sweeps the floor,
And goes out for an hour.
Returning at one,
To the age-long hum,
Of everlasting machinery!

Smash! Crash! Bang! A thousand more
Of the molded thing!
Night comes, and home he goes, to child and wife,
The next day the same,
Differing only in name,
Such is the Pressman's life!

THE POET

LISTEN to the Poet,
He has been given the vision
Of the Prophet;
He has been given to see
What shall be—
What should be!
His eye can decry
The movements of years, and centuries
Their age-long mysteries yield
Much to the world concealed.
The Poet doth try his flight on wing,
And in ecstasy sing
Of all he would bring, to glorify, in ideality
The too common thing.
The beautiful is his domain!
The gross, let others sing.

MARCH

MUCH maligned March,
  Usherer of the Equinox!
Conductor of processional march
  Of Spring's Renaissance!

Winter, with it's zero air,
  No longer here;
Now—the wind-whipped clouds,
  The blue-days clear.

Crocus peering in the snow,
  And violets soon to blow;
Tulips ranged in red and yellow,
  Where the garden's growing mellow.

  His nearby note—
Tuning the orchestra
  Of the song-bird's throat—
Winged-heralds of processional March
  Of earth's green Renaissance!

THE DANDELION

ORCHIDS, ten dollars a dozen,
Cannot compare
With the dandelion
In the yard there.

It seems all heaven
Its gold has given
For the perfection
Of the dandelion.

Round, yellow, and bright!
Studding the green lawn,
Gilding the day
As stars the night.

Everybody's a millionaire
With the golden
Dandelion—
In the yard, there.

MAY-TIME

It's fine to be alive to-day—
This budding day of May—
Martins in the air a-sporting!
Life-blood in our veins a-coursing!

The apple-tree's a shower of white,
Bursting on us in the night,
Peach and cherry everywhere,
Wafting to us perfumed air.

Sunshine from above a-streaming,
Through the orchard trees a-gleaming,
Morning-glories pink and purple,
Bluejays calling in the maple!

A half-year's expectancy
Flowering to-day, in ecstasy!
Gardeners second-seeding sowing,
Vines and plants and fruit a-growing—
It's fine to be alive to-day!
This budding day of May!

JUNE DAY

We caught something from June day,
Odor-potion from mown hay;
And again, in cool depths of the wood,
Nature conversed, and we understood;
Aloft the leafed trees,
Breeze refreshing,—
Buzz of bees.
Such primeval retreat vouchsafed to man,
The forest's seat,
Bird's carol!
Summer's heat—
Just to be alive
In God's Arcadia so sweet!

MY ROBIN

You may have your skylark,
Give me my robin;
Not soaring, high in the sky—
On his nest trilling, nearby;
  On his perch
  By the porch,
Red-coated neighbor, sweet-throated warbler.
He has a plaintive note, far-away,
Of perfect melody,
And he sings to my heart all day!

He purloins threads
For a nest for his eggs;
He rears his family
By the door in the apple-tree.
In the orchard his lute,
Trills constant tribute.
Near the window he sings,
To my workroom he brings—
  Melodious things!

First in spring
To pipe his praise hymn;
Home-keeper of the summer;
  In the fall
  Cheery call
  Last of all!

You may have your skylark;
Give me my robin,
Not soaring far in the sky—
On his nest singing, nearby.

SPARROWS

TWENTY sparrows in a flock,
Gray-coated visitors,
Picking up seeds.
Ground frozen as a rock!
In December—not June—
And they chirp as blithe
As birds that sing their tune
In June!

Cheerful neighbors of the winter,
Fluffy feathers,
Scorning the cold,
Chirping for others.

Like the sparrow our neighbor,
May all chirrup their tune,
As blithe in December,
As in June!

THE LAKE

SUMMER'S season brings vacation,
And year's earned recreation;
We seek the far retreat,
From dust, and men, and town's intemperate heat;
We seek the lake—pristine, recreating,
And for a while our ease we take.

There—where breezes blow,
There—where days are slow,
There—we nature know.

Launch and steamer ply, plowing by,
Boat of happy folk,
Sharing companionably, o'er intervening wave,
Repartee and joke.
Sailing craft, here and yon tacking,
'Gainst the wind raking
Yachtman's canvas flapping,
Water o'er the gunwale dripping.

Pike and pickerel, bass and perch,
Will leave no fisher in the lurch;
For sizzling supper;
We turn them brown, o'er coals of beech and birch,
And eat our meal beneath the starry dipper.

The spring-board dash!
The splash!
The clash with nature's gurgling fluid,
Lashed to frantics by our antics!
So deliciously cold,
Closing round our physic mold.

At night a walk along the shore,
Near silent trees;
Not far, the cadence of the plying oar,
And still the cool breeze.

Summer's retreat—happiness' seat,
There joy we find—and bliss partake!
Man's Temporal Paradise—The Lake!

COWS FEEDING

Colors spread for the sketch,
Brown—red—green, to mix
And lay on canvas.
A slope of green and cows feeding,
The herd working up the hill;
A white cow, cropping the grass close—
Heavy grass, green and fresh—
And her pink bag distended with milk.
Here, the calf cantering idly,
And the bull ahead, deep-voiced,
Discoursing of things unutterable!
The mulley is rich in red, with half a flank
of spotted gray,
And near three heifers that will tax our
colors to work in
Their ruddy coats, and vigor excess!
The Jersey, brown and black,
Feeds in the scene
Of cattle, cropping up the slope of green!

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

We have found the Garden
Of primal Eden.
Who would have thought
It in our back-lot!
So much happiness
To possess!

Fresh from creation—
Radishes, onions, lettuce,
Dew-sprinkled and crisp,
Serving our table.
Poppies growing on their stalks,
Nasturtium close to the ground,
Stained with gaudy color!

No crawling thing
Doth invade our Eden,
Nor flaming seraph
Drive us forth.
Ours is the soil to till,
Entice melons from the ground,
Cucumbers from the banked hill.
Sweet peas and larkspur
Hedge the Garden round!

ON THE SHORE

Roll, roll, roll,
Ceaseless dashing—splashing—
The combing waves come
O'er and o'er the near shoal.

Roll! roll! roll!
Crossing the line of sand,
The water, and the land,
—And the Infinite Friend—
Always at hand.

Blue of sky!
And song of bird!
A brimming sun,
—And a kindly word!

Roll, roll, roll,
We chant not sadness!
We chant gladness!
All eternity we shall roll,
Music to thy Soul.

THE INRUSH

"BLOWING fresh to-day!
Maybe
A gale at sea!"
Surges rushing on,
White combers coming—
They scare one!!
Full on the rocks they're lashed,
Weight of water—bubbling—splashed!
Retreating to the inrush,
Mercilessly dashed!
Great green boiling whirlpools
Lifted
And cast upon the beach,
Hungering and grasping
For all within their reach.
Frightful ocean—
Gray and black commotion!
"A windy day,
You're better, safe away!"

THE RAILROAD WALK

Not Rhenish Castle, nor Mountain-travel far—
But our own country!
The Railroad Walk—between two lines of steel—
Hard journeying. We pace embedded ties, 'neath
a scorching sun, crunching on the gravel.
Three miles the rails do stretch away, converging
at some monotonous point, towards which we
walk.
Here are cow-slips growing in the low ground, and
Grass, rank and luxuriant, to bound the grade.
Beyond the fence, vine-covered, a herd of Guernseys,
Brown and cream, cropping the feed and mooing,
And farther, a farmer plowing with a team
Big and black and strong, pulling the plow with
ease;
They lay over the rich earth as we pass
—Plodding on the gravel.
A silo caps yon hill, round and stacked with juicy
Cattle-fodder to make milk and cheese and butter;
And a wind-mill, majestic, pumps water;
Farms of many acres, and big red barns and homely
homes;
Deep dark woods, mysterious, coming into view—
Hay-making! Grain-harvesting! As we journey
through.

THE WATERING TROUGH

THE cobblestones and road are blistered by the heat
That bakes the village street;
Men move idly, talking:
It's too hot for even walking, so they stand shirt-sleeved
By the hotel or by the store,
And a farmer's dog pants in the store-door.
The Watering Trough is busy in the center of the street—
Full of water—cold—slopping over—running from a spout.
Here they come! The boy from nearby home, to drink;
And the Justice stops, and talks, and sweats,
Wearing long-tailed frock in spite of heat,
Because he's in the public street;
He talks across the trough unto the Farmer.
The latter,
Long and strong and lank, big-nosed, chin-whiskered,
Sweating in his shirt-sleev .s in the heat in the street;
And ponies halt, unchecked and drink, and grateful horses drink their fill, and the hearty Farmer
Dips up a brimming pail,—and waters
His automobile!

THE HUNTER'S RETURN

Two plodding figures
In the dusk,
Coats loaded with game,
Setters weary behind,
The full moon coming up
Round and yellow, in the water,
Through the rushes,
—Where they took their fowl.
Guns are heavy now,
Twigs snap crisp!
The wine of coming frost
Is on the air,
Buoyant nectar!
Tan, yellow, and brown,
Of the spare bush and tree,
Dogs and men, impatient of delay,
Home-going!—best part of the day!

CHRIST-MAS

Christ-mas—Christ Mass,
Led by our Great High Priest.
Who has been touched
By our infirmities,
Throughout the year.
Draw nigh to earth again, as of yore,
Blessing what we have of cheer.

Thy Star is in the ascendant,
It is Thy Birthday,
The Wise, jewel laden, come as
The Shepherds,
Homage to pay.
And earth—resplendent—
Crowns our supreme Holiday!

NEW YEAR

THE clean white page
Folded over;
Nothing written as yet—
Here's pen and ink,
The task is set,
Our New Year's best to engage!

All that's gone before
Is no more.
The fresh white page is so inviting—
Guard!—Inspire!—the writing.

FEBRUARY

READING by the grate, quite snug within,
Enthroned in living-room we sit,
Winter's Queen and King!
Through the paned window the landscape whitens,
The day is in a boisterous mood,
Near drift across our roadway heightens,
And we hug our crackling fire of wood!

Fireside journeys, easy traveling, far,
Our books conduct us to a milder clime,
Or through the Orient we wander,
And back again, for dinner-time.

We lay another stick to hear it snap,
There's romance in the glowing coals,
Then by the window we inspect the storm,
Contrast our luxury with the scene forlorn,
The out-doors, where the tempest bowls
The whiteness o'er the peeking knolls.

Retreating to our easy-chair and book,
Our comfort take,
And stack another chunk of oak
Upon the grate!

WINTER

WHEN last seen, as came the spring,
We rejoiced at your leave;
Now, O Winter, at your return
We do not grieve!
Snow-tossed, tempestuous,
White habiliments are arrayed
With their beauty, as May has her beauty
In the green glade.

Season of indoor cheer,
Leisure time of the year;
How welcome your cold clear atmosphere,
Invigorating! In sport bells ringing!
Coasting, sleighing!
As festive days draw near.
If the snow is a winding-sheet of death,
We do know
That life shall come again, with the spring,
Bringing all you have taken,
And to new splendor awaken.

The frigid ice doth suffice
To cast in mold,
The stored cold.
Thus the frozen pond, 'neath your wand,
Surface congealed,
Shall to the Summer blessings yield.

You do the windows etch with tracery,
Embank snow in sifted witchery.
The far-white landscape does invite
The Skie-pilgrim, there to find and know
The season's raptures, in the
Winter days, that blow—the snow!

MORNING IN WINTER

ZERO air,—
Silent—still—clear,
Smoke rising everywhere;
White—tinted—shade, cream,
And steam condensed upon the atmosphere,
Genii like,
In floating columns seen.
The East, gorgeous in advance
Of the sun's glance,

Now rising, whose aurora glow
Soon glistens o'er the plain of snow.
Cold—silent—still,
A milkman cuts the virgin street
The day has reached the hill!
And now, the jingling bell and honking horn
In traffic meet!

TWENTY BELOW

I WONDER if any one's freezing to-night,
  As I watch the white drifting snow;
In where I am it's cheery and bright,
  But outside—it'll go twenty below!

Twenty below! Twenty below!
  In here it's easily told;
Through the gathering gloom, the huddled forms,
  Go by in the killing cold.

And people are living in cellars and garrets,
  And cockle-shells on alleyway,
They're living in squalor like dogs and cats
  In the light of this glaring day!

I wonder if any one's freezing to-night,
  As hooded and furred folks go;
In by my grate it's jolly bright,
  But it's sure going twenty below!

ICE-BOATING

CLUTCHING a bounding plank,
Sighting ahead at the track,
Dodging the shaking boom—
Circling back—on the tack!

The wind is like a razor,
  As we make the whirl,
Clinging to the guy-ropes,
  We escape the twirl!

The runner-beam lifts off the ice,
Our weight extended holds it down!
The helmsman keeps the slipping course,
And back and forth, we make the run!

THE SNOW TEMPEST

A SKY of snow—above, below,
The driving air seems carrying everywhere
The white flakes! They fill the street,
They soon impede the feet
Of travelers and all who venture forth
Mid this whirling raider of the North!

The sun, an hour since, retreated to a cloud,
Before the ominous threatening, cowed,
While some withered ray
Still upward shooting,
Prolongs the gloomy day.

Vehicles yet moving
Clutch the abandoned road,
Struggling in the drifts,
With their homeward load.

On sidewalk, the shovel cohort throws
Volleys of flaked-whiteness
'Gainst the incessant tempest,
And still,—it blows—and snows!

At dusk, defeated, all are driven indoors,
To sit with cheer about the grate,
Piled high with glowing hickory, and calculate
The morning's depth which must be moved,
And ravages of other storms relate.

Alone, the Tempest occupies the night,
The air-raid! The combat!
We hear the phalanx in their eager flight,
Sweeping here and there! sifting the white
weight,
Till daylight comes,
—And all, retreat, before the light.

THE ROAD IN WINTER

Just a track
Cut in a foot of snow,
Plodding hoof-marks,
Where the teams go
Through drifts—
Piled as they blow.

A mile ahead
And eye discerns
But the same lengthened bed
Of even whiteness,
Touched now by glimmer
Of the sun's brightness.

A frozen ditch
And barren stalks
On either hand
More tracks, where the teamster
walks
—Through frozen lea,
And frozen land.

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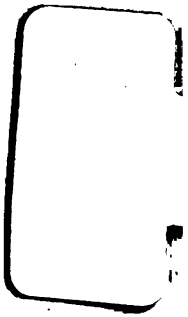

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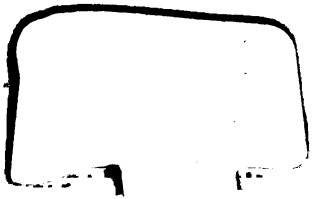

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